**Listing of Claims:**

**Claim 1-2 (Cancelled)**

**Claim 3. (Currently Amended)** A method of manufacturing a pivot assembly, comprising the steps of:

mating a ball bearing at each end of a shaft;

disposing a sleeve on an inner ring, between an outer circumference of the ball bearing and one end of the shaft;

fixing a seal member to cover an outer end face of the ball bearing;

imparting a pre-load pressure to the inner ring by applying pressure on the seal member; and

fixing the seal member to an outer circumference of the shaft.

**Claim 4. (Original)** The method according to claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

forming a sharp edge on an edge part of the seal member;

causing the sharp edge to stick closely at a point to one of the outer circumference of the shaft and the inner circumference of the sleeve; and

fixing the sharp edge at the point.

**Claim 5. (Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 3, further comprising the step of:

forming the seal member by press blanking; and

fixing by a welding ~~means~~ an edge part of the surface of the seal member that faces the press blanking to one of an outer circumference of the shaft and an inner circumference of the sleeve.

**Claim 6. (Currently Amended)** A method of manufacturing a pivot assembly, comprising the steps of:

mating a ball bearing at each end of a shaft;

disposing a spacer between an outer ring of the ball bearing and one end of the shaft;

fixing a seal member to cover an outer end face of the ball bearing;

imparting a pre-load pressure to the inner ring by applying pressure on the seal member; and

fixing the seal member to an outer circumference of the shaft.

**Claim 7. (Original)** The method according to claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

forming a sharp edge on an edge part of the seal member;

causing the sharp edge to stick closely at a point to one of the outer circumference of the shaft and the inner circumference of the sleeve; and

fixing the sharp edge at the point.

**Claim 8. (Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of:

forming the seal member by press blanking; and

fixing by a welding ~~means~~ an edge part of the surface of the seal member that faces the press blanking to one of an outer circumference of the shaft and an inner circumference of the sleeve.

**Claim 9. (New)** An apparatus for preload application to a hard disk drive pivot assembly including a shaft, a first ball bearing having a first inner ring and a first outer ring and located on a first end of the shaft, a second ball bearing having a second inner ring and a second outer ring and located on a second end of the shaft, a sleeve enclosing the first ball bearing and the second ball bearing, and a seal member covering an outer end face of the first ball bearing, said apparatus comprising:

a support means supporting the pivot assembly;

a pressing member applying the preload to at least one of the first inner ring and the first outer ring of the first ball bearing by pressing on the seal member; and

a welding means laser welding the seal member to one of an outer surface of the shaft and an inner surface of the sleeve while the pressing member applies the preload.

**Claim 10 (New)** The apparatus for preload application in accordance with Claim 9, wherein the pressing member further comprises a plurality of grooves formed parallel to an axis of the pressing member, distributed circumferentially along a surface of the pressing member and extending to a surface of the seal member, and wherein the welding means conveys a laser beam through at least one of the plurality of grooves to the surface of the seal member.